

**- Funding Contributes to Long-Term Academy Goal-**

Washington, DC – The U.S. House of Representatives today passed the final version of the fiscal year 2010 Defense Appropriations Bill that included \$800,000 to fund diversity recruitment for the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. The funding, requested by the Academy, will help West Point revolutionize its minority recruiting process for the nation's elite officer corps. The funding was included in the 2010 Defense Appropriations Conference Report, which is expected to soon pass the Senate and then be signed into law by the President. The funding Hall secured was originally included in the House Defense Appropriations bill, which passed in August.

For years, West Point has struggled in reaching its diversity class composition goals, especially in terms of African-Americans. The average number of African Americans West Point has admitted over the last decade has been 82 – far beneath its internal goal of 130-169, based on 10-13% of a 1,300 person incoming class.

"West Point is working hard to make the officer corps more representative of the Army as a whole," said Congressman Hall. "This federal funding would help West Point achieve this goal."

This April, West Point hosted its 10th Annual West Point Diversity Leadership Conference, with the theme of "Building a Culture of Diversity and Inclusion." The conference studied in depth the practices and accomplishments of successful diversity and inclusion efforts in the private sector, government, and academia.

Within the past four years, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force have each invested in strategic diversity initiatives. More recently, the Service Academies have established staff diversity responsibilities or institutional diversity offices. The funding that Hall secured in the Defense Appropriations bill would provide the financing to support these initiatives.

The Defense Appropriations Act makes critical investments in the health, well-being and readiness of our armed forces, and also includes a number of emergency provisions to help American families weather the recession. It includes a 3.4% pay raise for military personnel and supports military family advocacy programs. It also continues efforts to end the practice of "stop loss" and pays troops an additional \$500 for every month their term of service is involuntarily extended by that practice. To achieve fiscal responsibility, the legislation reigns in outsourcing and puts Defense personnel, not contractors, in charge of critical department functions. To help Americans hit hardest by this recession, this bill also provides emergency relief by extending unemployment insurance, helping with health insurance premiums through the COBRA program, and funding for nutrition assistance programs to help families in need put food on their table.